

Understanding an Insurgency: Achieving the United States' Strategic Objectives in Afghanistan

**A Monograph
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Abstract

UNDERSTANDING AND INSURGENCY: ACHIEVING THE UNITED STATES' STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES IN AFGHANISTAN by MAJ Jason T. Williams, U.S. Army, 51 pages.

The problems in Afghanistan are not simple and there is no single solution. Indeed, the problems in Afghanistan are not limited to Afghanistan. Instead, the problems extend to all of Afghanistan's immediate neighbors as well as, among others, the United States, NATO, Russia, Iran, and India. However, perhaps nowhere is the problem more pronounced than in Pakistan. Pakistan's relationships with Afghanistan and the rest of the world are heavily influenced by Pakistan's fears that it is isolated against an existential threat in India and its distrust of the United States. This fear has led Pakistan to pursue policies that have further complicated the situation in Afghanistan and created domestic turmoil that causes Pakistan to view the Taliban and its border region with Afghanistan from a different perspective than the United States.

Given the specific context of Afghanistan, the United States and its allies must utilize both direct and indirect approaches and capitalize on their diplomatic, information operations, military, and economic resources in order to achieve its strategic objectives in the region. With respect to diplomacy, the United States must engage with Pakistan and the other nations in the region in order to assuage Pakistani fears of isolation at the hands of India and its distrust of the United States. The information instrument should be directed at the citizens and governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Taliban and *al Qaeda*, the citizens and governments of the other Central Asian nations, and major regional players such as the European Union (EU), NATO, Saudi Arabia, China, Iran, and Russia. These messages should focus on delegitimizing *al Qaeda*'s ideology and actions; separating the Taliban, which is a regional insurgency, from *al Qaeda*, which is a global insurgency; espousing a U.S. position that is oriented on a long-term commitment to the region; and promoting coalition efforts and membership. The military instrument should continue to be used to conduct counterterror operations against *al Qaeda* as well as assisting the security forces of both Afghanistan and Pakistan in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. The U.S. military should also continue to train Afghanistan's and Pakistan's security forces as well as combating the illegal drug production that finances a significant amount of the Taliban's activities. The economic element of national power should be used in conjunction with diplomacy to negotiate infrastructure projects that are financed by Afghanistan's neighbors. Additionally, economic resources should continue to be used in Afghanistan to assist in the equipping and training of Afghanistan's security forces and in Pakistan to help finance their COIN and counterterror operations against the Taliban and *al Qaeda*.

In order to support these recommendations, open-source material is used to analyze the situation in the region. To conduct this analysis, it is necessary to first provide the historical context of Afghanistan. Next, evaluation criteria derived from prevailing insurgency theorists are used in order to understand the conditions in which insurgencies operate and to detail the specific conditions that apply to Afghanistan and the Taliban. The evaluation criteria that are used are: a cause, weakness of the counterinsurgent, the geographic conditions, and outside support. Secondary sources, primarily from Ahmed Rashid, Barnett Rubin, Ali Jalali, Robert D. Kaplan, Scott R. McMichael, Kenneth Katzman, Daniel Markey, and Marvin G. Weinbaum as well as numerous articles from the Council on Foreign Relations are used to provide the case specific data to the insurgency theory. Finally, after this initial analysis, the remainder of the monograph focuses on how the United States can apply the elements of national power in order to achieve its strategic objectives in the region.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>Analysis: Understanding the Afghanistan Insurgency</i>	6
Historical Context.....	6
A Cause: What the Taliban Wants	13
Weakness of the Counterinsurgent: Limitations of the Afghan Government	14
Geographic Conditions: A Significant Limiting Factor	21
Outside Support: Active Sanctuary in Pakistan.....	27
<i>Conclusion</i>	30
<i>Recommendations</i>	33
Diplomacy	34
Information	40
Military	42
Economic	45
<i>Bibliography</i>	48

In February 2009, the government of Pakistan entered into a peace agreement with the Taliban in the Bajaur region of the Swat Valley. The agreement allows for the enforcement of *sharia* law and calls for a cease-fire between the Taliban and Pakistan's army. Pakistani officials assert that the adoption of *sharia* law will bring swift and fair justice to the Swat Valley, where people have long complained of legal corruption and delays.¹ Pakistan further asserts that by addressing the long-standing anger in the region over its slow and corrupt justice system, the government can mitigate one of the major sources of Taliban influence in the area. The Pakistani officials also say that the new system will have "nothing in common" with the draconian rule of the Taliban militia that ran Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001. There are some that would suggest, however, that this agreement is nothing more than the government of Pakistan's recognition of the actual situation on the ground; the Taliban has essentially controlled the area for the last year and a half. Clearly, NATO and the United States are concerned that any peace accord could effectively cede the Swat Valley to the Taliban and the other extremists, such as *al Qaeda* and the Kashmiri separatists groups, which they protect.²

While this situation develops in Pakistan, the United States and the new administration of President Barack Obama are at work developing a strategy for Afghanistan. The current U.S. National Security Strategy states:

¹ Carin Zissis and Jayshree Bajora. "Pakistan's Tribal Areas," *Council on Foreign Relations* (October 26, 2007), http://www.cfr.org/publication/11973/pakistans_tribal_areas.html (accessed September 23, 2008). The portion of the Swat Valley that is being discussed is in the Bajaur region within Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). Prior to the agreement to enforce *sharia* law, this portion of the Swat Valley, like the rest of the FATA, was governed by a system known as the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR). While the Swat Valley is now governed by *sharia* law, the rest of the FATA remains under the control of the FCR. The history and inadequacies of this system will be detailed later.

² Pamela Constable, "Islamic Law Instituted in Pakistan's Swat Valley," *The Washington Post*, February 17, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/16/AR2009021601063.html> (accessed March 15, 2009); Chris Brummitt, "Taliban Says Cease-Fire Will Continue," *The Washington Post*, February 25, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/24/AR2009022400390.html> (accessed March 15, 2009).

From the beginning, the War on Terror has been both a battle of arms and a battle of ideas – a fight against the terrorists and against their murderous ideology. In the short run, the fight involves using military force and other instruments of national power to kill or capture the terrorists, deny them safe haven or control of any nation; prevent them from gaining access to WMD; and cut off their sources of support. In the long run, winning the war on terror means winning the battle of ideas, for it is ideas that can turn the disenchanted into murderers willing to kill innocent victims.³

Expectations are that the new strategy will contain some of these same themes, but will focus more on Pakistan's ability to contain the extremism that is emanating from their tribal regions, as well as leveraging the assistance of other regional powers in order to achieve its strategic objectives.⁴ As the Obama administration develops its new strategy for Afghanistan, some are suggesting that Afghanistan needs an "Iraq-like surge."⁵ While it may be necessary to increase the number of troops in Afghanistan, it is important to remember that no two insurgencies are the same. Indeed, while insurgencies often share similar conditions, the specific context surrounding each insurgency is different.⁶ For example, prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Iraq had a functioning economy, a government infrastructure, and an established transportation and communications network. However, prior to the U.S. led invasion of Afghanistan, Afghanistan had none of these things. Furthermore, while the insurgents in Iraq are likely assisted by outside

³ George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 16, 2006, 9.

⁴ Anne Gearan and Anne Flaherty, "Obama Close to Announcing New Afghan Strategy," *The Huffington Post*, March 15, 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/03/13/obama-close-to-announcing_n_174570.html (accessed March 5, 2009). The recommendations in this monograph were written between December 2008 and January 2009 prior to the drafting of the new administrations Afghanistan strategy. Moreover, between the time the recommendations portion of this monograph was completed and the monograph was published, several of the monograph's recommendations were realized. First, the Obama administration announced that they were going to develop a strategy for Afghanistan and that it was going to focus on the terrorist safe haven in Pakistan. The strategy will likely be published in March 2009. Second, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced the United States' willingness to talk to Iran and Russia over the future of Afghanistan.

⁵ Greg Bruno, "A Surge of Will in Afghanistan," *Council on Foreign Relations* (September 30, 2008), http://www.cfr.org/publication/17399/surge_of_will_in_afghanistan.html (accessed September 30, 2008).

⁶ United States Department of the Army. FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, December 2006), 1-3.

support they do not also benefit from a safe haven in a neighboring country. In Afghanistan, however, the Taliban has been able to continue their insurgency largely due to the safe haven that exists in Pakistan's tribal areas. It is with these differences in mind, and with the knowledge that the specific context of each insurgency must be analyzed without comparison to other insurgencies, that the specific context in Afghanistan can begin analyzed independent of any unnecessary comparison to Iraq.

Introduction

The problems in Afghanistan are not limited to just Afghanistan. Instead, the problems extend to all of Afghanistan's immediate neighbors as well as, among others, the United States, NATO, Russia, Iran, and India. However, perhaps nowhere are the problems more pronounced than in Pakistan. Pakistan's relationships with Afghanistan and the rest of the world are heavily influenced by Pakistan's fears that it is isolated against an existential threat in India and its distrust of the United States.⁷ This fear has led Pakistan to pursue policies that have further complicated the situation in Afghanistan and created domestic turmoil that causes Pakistan to view the Taliban and its border region with Afghanistan from a different perspective than the United States. Pakistan's fears have created a situation where the Taliban, which is a local insurgent group, has been allowed to find sanctuary in Pakistan's tribal areas from which it continues to attempt to undermine the elected government in Kabul. This problem is compounded by the fact that the Taliban provides safe haven to *al Qaeda*, a global insurgent group, and several other Kashmiri separatist groups, all of which have historically received support from Pakistan.

⁷ Daniel Markey, *Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt: Council Special Report 36* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Center for Preventive Action, August 2008), 22-23. Daniel Markey is a senior fellow for India, Pakistan, and South Asia at the Council on Foreign Relations. From 2003-2007, he held the South Asia portfolio on the policy planning staff at the U.S. Department of State. Prior to government service, Dr. Markey taught at Princeton University and served as the executive of Princeton's Research Program in International Security.

Furthermore, the government of Afghanistan's ability to project legitimate power and thus combat the Taliban is limited by Afghanistan's dismal transportation and communications network, the weakness of their newly formed government and security forces, the population that inhabits the Afghan-Pakistan border region, and the active sanctuary the Taliban enjoys in Pakistan. With that said, if the United States is going to achieve its strategic objectives in the region, it will have to utilize a combination of direct and indirect approaches that leverage all of its resources from across the elements of national power.

With respect to diplomacy, the United States must engage with Pakistan and the other nations in the region in order to assuage Pakistan of its fears of isolation at the hands of India and its distrust of the United States. By alleviating Pakistan of these concerns, Pakistan will be more willing and better able to focus on their internal issues, such as the terrorist and militant safe haven that exists in their tribal areas and the insurgency that is brewing in Balochistan.

The information instrument should be directed at the citizens and governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Taliban and *al Qaeda*, the citizens and governments of the other Central Asian nations, and major regional players such as the European Union (EU), NATO, Saudi Arabia, China, Iran, and Russia. These messages should focus on delegitimizing *al Qaeda*'s ideology and actions; separating the Taliban, which is a regional insurgency, from *al Qaeda*, which is a global insurgency; espousing a U.S. position that is oriented on a long-term commitment to the region; and promoting coalition efforts and membership.

The military instrument should continue to conduct counterterror operations against *al Qaeda* and the Taliban, as well as train and assist the security forces of both Afghanistan and Pakistan in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. However, it should not needlessly divert attention and resources away from the other elements of national power. In Afghanistan, the U.S. military should provide the security necessary to assist the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) as it strives to gain legitimacy. The U.S. military should also assist the GIRoA in combating the illegal drug production that finances a significant amount of the

Taliban's activities. With respect to Pakistan, as was previously stated, the U.S. military should train the Pakistan military, which has traditionally been focused on a major combat operations threat on its eastern border, in conducting counterinsurgency (COIN) operations along its western border.

The economic element of national power should be used in conjunction with diplomacy to negotiate infrastructure projects in Afghanistan that are financed by its neighbors. Additionally, the economic resources of the U.S. and other nations should be used to assist in training and equipping Afghanistan's security forces. Economic resources should also be used to develop and implement an alternate crop to replace poppy. Furthermore, economic resources should continue to be used in Pakistan to help finance their counterterror and COIN operations against *al Qaeda* and Taliban.

In order to support these recommendations, open-source material will be used to analyze the situation in the region. To conduct this analysis, it is first necessary to provide the historical context of Afghanistan. This serves to better inform and assist with gaining an understanding of the situation. Next, evaluation criteria derived from the prevailing insurgency theorists are used in order to understand the conditions in which insurgencies operate and to detail the specific conditions that apply to Afghanistan and the Taliban.⁸ The evaluation criteria that are used are: a

⁸ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (1964. Reprint, Wesport: Praegar Security International, 2006); Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (Dulles: Brassey's, Inc., 1990); Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed. (Dulles: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005). The evaluation criteria are drawn primarily from David Galula and Bard O'Neill. David Galula was a professional officer in the French Army where he saw action in North Africa, Italy, and France. After World War II, Galula was assigned to China and also served with the United Nations as a military observer in Greece and a military attaché in Hong Kong. Additionally, Galula was stationed in Algeria at the time of the revolt by the French Army. In recent years as the United States has found itself fighting insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, Galula's work has become extremely relevant and influential; his influence can be seen throughout the pages of the Army and Marine Corps most recent counterinsurgency field manual. Bard O'Neill is a professor of international affairs and the director of Middle East studies as well as the director of studies of insurgency and revolution at the National War College in Washington, D.C. Additionally, O'Neill has served as a consultant to various high-ranking officials in the Departments of State and Defense.

cause, weakness of the counterinsurgent, the geographic conditions, and outside support.⁹

Secondary sources, primarily from Ahmed Rashid, Barnett Rubin, Ali Jalali, Robert D. Kaplan, Scott R. McMichael, Kenneth Katzman, Daniel Markey, and Marvin G. Weinbaum as well as numerous articles from the Council on Foreign Relations are used to provide the case specific data to the insurgency theory.¹⁰ Finally, after this initial analysis, the remainder of the monograph focuses on how the United States can apply the elements of national power in order to achieve its strategic objectives in the region.

Analysis: Understanding the Afghanistan Insurgency

Historical Context

For the last thirty-five years, Afghanistan's political system has been in a state of crisis. This crisis, for the first time since the "Great Game", places Afghanistan in the center of the international stage.¹¹ Starting in the 1970s, each decade has been characterized by a different type of turmoil that has spread outside the borders of Afghanistan. In the 1970s, the Cold War came to Afghanistan in the form of an internal struggle for power between Islamist and Communist. At the height of the Cold War, this struggle bled over into the 1980s when Afghanistan's internal struggle became an external struggle after the Soviet invasion. Ten years later, in the wake of Soviet withdrawal and the end of the Cold War, the 1990s saw Afghanistan embroiled in another

⁹ While both Galula and O'Neill offer similar evaluation criteria, they often use different names for their variables. However the variables are essentially describing the same evaluation criteria.

¹⁰ An introduction for each of these authors along with a description of their work will be provided as their work appears in this monograph.

¹¹ Jayshree Bajoria, "The Troubled Afghan-Pakistan Border," *Council on Foreign Relations* (November 29, 2007), http://www.cfr.org/publication/14905/troubled_afghanpakistani_border.html (accessed September 23, 2008). The term "Great Game" refers to the geopolitical struggle between the British and the Russian empires in the 1800s. The British held the Indian subcontinent while the Russians held Central Asia. Their spheres of influence overlapped in Afghanistan. The British were concerned about Russian expansion and thus invaded Afghanistan in 1839 and fought the first Anglo-Afghan War. This led to a decade of machinations between the British and the Russians and two more wars, at the end of which Afghanistan won its independence in 1919.

internal struggle; however, this time the struggle was a civil war between the various *mujahedin* parties that had fought the Soviet Union. With the withdrawal of the Soviet Union the United States lost interest in Afghanistan, and it appeared initially that Afghanistan would fade out of the international spotlight. However, during the civil war that followed the Soviet withdrawal, the Taliban rose to power and provided safe haven to *al Qaeda*. After *al Qaeda*'s attacks on the United States in September 2001, the United States and some of the former *mujahedin* parties, known as the Northern Alliance, overthrew the Taliban government of Afghanistan. Since their removal from power, the Taliban have been fighting an insurgency against the current UN backed government of Afghanistan. This insurgency has characterized the first decade of the twenty-first century. Prior to analyzing the on-going insurgency in Afghanistan, it is useful to further detail each of the previous decades dating back to the 1970s to better understand Afghanistan's current complex situation and the underlying historical context.

In 1973, Afghanistan's two-hundred-year-old Durrani dynasty came to an end when King Zahir Shah was overthrown by his cousin and brother-in-law, Sardar Mohammed Daud.¹² Daud was supported by the budding communist parties inside Afghanistan, and accordingly he began to slant the government of Afghanistan towards the Marxist Soviet Union. Daud's affinity towards the Soviets led to a crackdown on Afghanistan's nascent Islamic fundamentalist movement. In order to avoid arrest, many of the leaders of Afghanistan's Islamic movement fled to Pakistan two years after Daud's ascension to power. The Afghan Islamists were linked to the "Muslim Brotherhood" and received sanctuary from Pakistan's most influential Islamic party, Jamiat-e-

¹² Robert Kaplan, *Soldiers of God: With Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 194. The Durrani Empire is often considered the origin of the state of Afghanistan and Ahmad Shah Durrani is credited with establishing the modern nation state of Afghanistan. Robert Kaplan is a correspondent for *The Atlantic Monthly* and the author of eight other books on travel and foreign affairs including *Balkan Ghosts*. Kaplan wrote *Soldiers of God* after living among the *mujahedin* in the 1980s.

Islami.¹³ When Daud began to back the Pakistani Pashtun and Baloch nationalists' efforts to destabilize Pakistan, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) decided to support the Afghan Islamists and their efforts to launch an insurgent movement against Daud. The Afghan Islamists, including Gulbuddin Hikmetyar, Burhanuddin Rabbani, and Ahmad Shah Masud, were trained by Lieutenant General Naseerullah Babar, the head of Pakistan's Frontier Corps, and sent back to Afghanistan where they were quickly defeated.¹⁴ However, Daud's authoritarianism combined with the appeal of communism in the army led to a military coup by Marxist army officers in April 1978. The army attempted to impose a purist Soviet-style Marxist state in Afghanistan; however, Afghanistan's two leading communists parties began a bloody feud as they attempted to implement land and educational reforms on Afghanistan's conservative, tribal-based Muslim society. The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on December 24, 1979 in order to quell the brewing civil war and the growing strength of the *mujahedin* insurgency.¹⁵

In the 1980s, at the height of the Cold War, the *mujahedin*, led by Hikmetyar, Rabbani, and Masud, and backed by the United States and Pakistan's ISI, fought the Soviet Union and its

¹³ Mary Crane, "Does the Muslim Brotherhood Have Ties to Terrorism?," *Council on Foreign Relations* (April 5, 2005) <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9248/> (accessed March 17, 2009); Seyyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Damascus: Kazi Publications, 1964). The Muslim Brotherhood is a transnational Sunni Islam political movement that is the largest opposition organization in many Muslim nations. Among the Brotherhood's more influential members was Sayyid Qutb. Qutb was the author of one of Islam's most important books, *Milestones*, which called for the restoration of Islam by re-establishing the *Sharia* and by using "physical power and *Jihad* for abolishing the organizations and authorities of the *Jahili* system," which he believed to include the entire Muslim world. Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri have claimed to have been influenced by the religious and political ideas of several professors with strong ties to the Muslim Brotherhood including both Sayyid Qutb and his brother Muhammad Qutb.

¹⁴ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil & Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 184-185. Babar would become Pakistan's interior minister under Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 1994. Ironically, Babar became instrumental in the launching of the Taliban in order to defeat the *mujahedin* that he had trained. Ahmed Rashid is a Pakistani Journalist, based in Lahore, who writes for *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Washington Post*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *The New York Review of Books*, *BBC Online*, and *The Nation*. He is also a regular on NPR, CNN, and the BBC World Service.

¹⁵ Ahmed Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Group, 2008), 9.

attempt to spread Marxism.¹⁶ However, the ISI, under the military regime of General Zia ul-Haq, did not allow America's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to aid the *mujahedin* directly. Instead, the ISI used the CIA money and arms as bribes to keep the various *mujahedin* parties under their control. In fact, the greatest proportion of the aid went to the most extreme groups, such as Hikmetyar's *Hizb-e-Islami* party. After the Soviet withdrawal in February 1989 and despite the objections of the now bickering *mujahedin* parties, Afghanistan's communist president Mohammed Najibullah remained in power for two years. In the spring of 1992, a revolt from within the communist party forced Najibullah from power. A United Nations (UN) plan to transfer power failed and the Pashtun forces of Hikmetyar and the Tajik forces of Rabbani, along with his military commander, Ahmad Shah Masud, began a race for Kabul. Rabbani won, and Afghanistan came under the control of non-Pashtuns for the first time in three hundred years.¹⁷

As the Cold War came to an end, and the U.S. lost interest in the region, the various *mujahedin* parties, which were never truly united, broke into warring factions and fought the civil war that would characterize the 1990s. Of these factions, the most ruthless was that of Hikmetyar. Hikmetyar refused to accept any compromise that did not include him as president and was openly supported by the ISI.¹⁸ In direct and fervent conflict with Hikmetyar was Masud, who was now the defense minister in Kabul under President Rabbani. The ethnic rivalries between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns, which were suppressed when the *mujahedin* were fighting a common enemy in the Soviet Union, now erupted into a civil war. In January 1993, Hikmetyar and his allies began shelling Kabul and intense street-to-street and house-to-house fighting occurred as

¹⁶ George Crile, *Charlie Wilson's War: The Extraordinary Story of the Largest Covert Operation in History* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003). *Charlie Wilson's War* provides an excellent in depth review of the U.S. role during the Soviet's war in Afghanistan.

¹⁷ Ibid., 10-11.

¹⁸ Robert D. Kaplan, *Soldiers of God: With Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 238.

Masud's men defended the city. President Rabbani, who refused to vacate the presidency, controlled only Kabul and the northeast of the country, while the west, centered on Herat, was under the control of the Hazara warlord Ismael Khan. The north was ruled by the Uzbek general Rashid Dostum, and central Afghanistan was under the control of the Hazaras. In the south and east the Pashtuns were even more fragmented, with one large area around Jalalabad ruling three provinces near Pakistan; a small area near Kabul was controlled by Hikmetyar; while the south was ruled by multiple commanders.¹⁹ These conditions led to the emergence of the Taliban.

The Taliban formed in an effort to restore peace to Afghanistan, disarm the population, enforce *Sharia* law, and defend Islam in Afghanistan. The Taliban was initially a mixture of *mujahedin* who fought against the Soviets and Pashtun tribesmen, whose roots extended through Afghanistan to Pakistan, particularly into Pakistan's North West Frontier Province, where many of them were raised and studied in Pakistan's *madrassas* amongst their fellow Pashtuns.²⁰ While in the *madrassas*, these students learned a more ideological and strict brand of Islam than the one practiced in the mountains of Afghanistan. Similarly, in the urban environment of Pakistan and the adjacent refugee camps, which were crowded with Pashtuns who had fled Afghanistan during the war with the Soviets, religion was reinvented in a harsher form to preserve the values that were under attack.²¹ This new brand of Islam was a result of the mixing of Wahhabism and Deobandism.²²

¹⁹ Ahmen Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Group, 2008), 12.

²⁰ Eben Kaplan and Greg Bruno, "The Taliban in Afghanistan," *Council on Foreign Relations* (July 2, 2008). <http://www.cfr.org/publication/10551/> (accessed December 12, 2008).

²¹ Robert D. Kaplan, *Soldiers of God: With Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 233-237.

²² International Crisis Group, "Understanding Islam." *International Crisis Group* (March 2, 2005), http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/middle_east_north_africa/egypt_north_africa/37_understanding_islamism.pdf (accessed May 2, 2008). Wahhabism arose in what is now Saudi Arabia in the eighteenth century with the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab. Wahhab led a puritanical revolt

After their war with the Soviets, under the influence of this new brand of Islam, many young Pashtun men returned to their villages in Afghanistan or their *madrassas* in Pakistan, angry about the civil war now encompassing Afghanistan, and began discussing with their tribal elders what could be done. These young men joined together and named themselves *Talibs*, which means religious students who seek justice and knowledge.²³ From 1994-1996 the Taliban fought against the various warlords for control of Kabul, finally seizing it on 26 September 1996. After seizing Kabul, the Taliban continued to battle anti-Taliban forces for control of Afghanistan.

Initially, the United States was not critical of the Taliban. However, after the Taliban's treatment of women began to be exposed in western media and the fact that the Taliban refused to turn over Osama Bin Laden following *al Qaeda's* bombing of two U.S. embassies in Africa, the United States' position changed.²⁴ After *al Qaeda's* attacks on the United States in September 2001, the United States led an invasion of Afghanistan, which, with the help of the Northern Alliance, toppled the Taliban-led government in October 2001. During the invasion, many leaders of the Taliban and *al Qaeda* escaped across the border to the tribal areas of western Pakistan.²⁵ Since that time, the Taliban has been using the sanctuary in Pakistan to fight an insurgency against the current UN backed government of Afghanistan and the United States in order to

against what he considered to be the lax practices of the day. Wahhab used Hanbalism as the doctrinal basis for his teachings. Hanbalism adheres to the literal reading of scripture, allowing very little room for deliberation or interpretation. Deobandism comes from the village of Deoband, which is outside New Delhi, where in the nineteenth century an Islamic academy promoted an austere brand of Islam that adhered to a strict reading of scripture and sectarian hostility towards Shiism. This Islamic academy also spread anti-British sentiments and a more general hostility towards Western culture. Wahhabism and Deobandism mixed with the infusion of Arabs into the *mujahedin* during the *mujahedin's* war with the Soviets in the 1980s.

²³ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil & Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 22.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

²⁵ Ahmed Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Group, 2008), 91-93.

regain control and reestablish what the Taliban sees as a proper Islamic government in Afghanistan.

Since the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, the UN and the U.S. have sought to establish a legitimate democratically elected government in Afghanistan. The first step in this process began on November 14, 2001 when UN Security Council Resolution 1378 was adopted. The resolution called for a “central” role for the UN in establishing a transitional administration in Afghanistan, and it further invited member states to send peacekeeping forces to promote stability and aid delivery. Subsequently on December 5, 2001, the “Bonn Agreement” was signed forming the interim administration headed by Hamid Karzai.²⁶ The agreement also authorized the internal peace keeping force to maintain security in Kabul and reapplied Afghanistan’s 1964 constitution until a new one could be drafted. The permanent constitution was adopted in November 2003. One year later on November 4, 2004 Karzai became the first democratically elected president in the history of Afghanistan.²⁷ Opinions about President Karzai’s tenure in office have been decidedly mixed. While some officials point to the progress he has made with respect to access to health care, education, and a growth in tax revenues, others point to Karzai’s familial ties to the illicit drug trade, corruption, and the reemergence of the Taliban insurgency.²⁸ It is against this

²⁶ Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Updated September 29, 2008, 8. The Bonn Agreement was reached on 6 December 2001 in Bonn, Germany. It called for “a broad-based, gender-sensitive, multiethnic and fully representative government” and the other bureaucratic apparatuses through which Afghanistan could be governed. Additionally, the Bonn Agreement called for an emergency *Loya Jirga* by June 2002, to decide on a new transitional government. The Bonn Agreement also called for presidential and parliamentary elections. Kenneth Katzman has served in government and the private sector as an analyst in Persian Gulf affairs, with special emphasis on Iran and Iraq. In his current position, Dr. Katzman analyzes U.S. policy and legislation on the Persian Gulf region for members of Congress and their staffs. He has spoken before several groups and appeared in numerous media outlets discussing his areas of specialty. These appearances include CNN, *NBC Nightly News*, *Nightline*, *The News Hour with Jim Lehrer*, MBC (Middle East Broadcasting Company), and Independent Television (London).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Greg Bruno, “Political Tea Leaves in Afghanistan,” *Council on Foreign Relations* (September 11, 2008). http://www.cfr.org/publication/17077/political_tea_leaves_in_afghanistan.html (accessed

backdrop that Karzai will run for reelection in the summer of 2009. With this knowledge of the historical context surrounding Afghanistan, it is possible to utilize the aforementioned evaluation criteria of a cause, the weakness of the counterinsurgent, the geographic conditions, and outside support to analyze the conditions under which the Taliban insurgency is attempting to regain its position of power and establish itself as the legitimate government of Afghanistan.

A Cause: What the Taliban Wants

According to David Galula, what makes one country more vulnerable than another to an insurgency is the depth and the acuity of its existing problems. In this environment of strife, according to Galula, the first requirement for an insurgent group is to determine which problem will be their cause. The problems may be essentially political or related to the national or international situation of the country. The problems could be social, as when one class is exploited by another or denied any possibility of improving its situation. The problems may be economic, such as the low price of agricultural products in relation to industrial goods, or the import of foreign goods rather than the development of a national industry. The problems could have their roots in racial, religious, or cultural issues. The problems may even be artificial so long as they have a chance of being accepted as fact by the population. Indeed, problems of all natures are exploitable for an insurgency, so long as they meet the above criteria.²⁹

When the Taliban emerged in 1994, the primary cause for the Taliban's insurgency was their perception that the government of Afghanistan was corrupt and rapacious. The country was divided into warlord fiefdoms, with the warlords fighting each other for power. Warlords would

December 12, 2008). For more information on Karzai's connection to the drug trade and corruption see Ahmed Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Group, 2008), 317-337.

²⁹ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 14.

seize people's homes and farms, rape their daughters, abuse and rob the population, and tax travelers at will. Moreover, for the first time in 300 years Pashtuns did not lead the central government of Afghanistan. From the beginning, the Pashtun dominated Taliban has described their goals as, the restoration of peace, the disarmament of the population, the enforcement of *Sharia* law, and the defense of Islam in Afghanistan.³⁰

Today, the Taliban's insurgency continues with their belief that the current UN back government of Afghanistan is illegitimate. Despite being out of power for nearly eight years, the Taliban remains influential in portions of southern and eastern Afghanistan while continuing to undermine the central government. Furthermore, since mid-2006, the Taliban has escalated its attacks on coalition forces, with fighters using suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices. The increase in these types of attacks is likely the result of the infusion of new, younger and more violent members into the Taliban who have been influenced by the fighting in Iraq. These younger and more violent members of the Taliban have risen to power in the wake of the killing and capturing of several of the Taliban's original leaders.³¹

Weakness of the Counterinsurgent: Limitations of the Afghan Government

A cause alone is not enough to allow the insurgent group to launch their revolutionary war. Because the insurgent is starting from paltry beginnings and the government has the means of the state at its disposal, it is necessary for the insurgent to have some sort of protection. According to Galula, the greatest protection an insurgent can receive is from weaknesses in the government. These weaknesses are manifested in a lack of national consensus amongst the people

³⁰ Ahmed Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*, (New York: Penguin Group, 2008), 13. In order to lead their struggle to cleanse society the Taliban chose Mullah Mohammed Omar, a thirty-nine year old veteran of the *mujahedin* with no social status or tribal pedigree, as their leader.

³¹ Eben Kaplan and Greg Bruno, "The Taliban in Afghanistan," *Council on Foreign Relations* (July 2, 2008). <http://www.cfr.org/publication/10551/> (accessed December 12, 2008).

or the government, the government's lack of counterinsurgency warfare knowledge, and an inability of the government to control the population. These conditions afford the insurgent protection in the early stages of their revolutionary war.³²

Afghanistan's history is characterized by a lack of national consensus in both the population and the government. The present borders of Afghanistan were drawn by agreements between foreign powers and, like many other post-colonial period nation states, not according to the ethnic or nationalist identity of the population therein. The official borders of Afghanistan bisect the traditional areas of settlement occupied by four main ethnic groups: Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and the Hazaras. The Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, live in the center, south, and east of the country with the rest of the Pashtuns living in Pakistan. The Tajiks live in the northeast of country, with the majority of Tajiks living in neighboring Tajikistan. The Uzbeks live in the northwest of the country, with the majority of the Uzbek population residing in neighboring Uzbekistan. The Hazaras live in the central north and northwest of the country, with the rest of the population living in Iran and Pakistan.³³

The majority, 80 percent, of Afghanistan's population is Sunni Muslim, with Shiite Muslims making up approximately 14 percent, and members of other religions making up the final 6 percent. The official languages are Pashtun and Dari, while the alphabet is Arabic. In addition to the official languages, there are more than thirty other minor languages in use.³⁴ While these basic demographic figures provide a window through which to catch a glimpse of the disparate nature of Afghanistan's population, it is not enough information to be able to

³² Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 17.

³³ CIA World Fact Book, "Afghanistan," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> (accessed November 24, 2008).

³⁴ Ibid.

understand the lack of consensus amongst the population and the government; it is also necessary to study the lack of consensus in the socio-political structure of the society.

Bard O'Neill stated that socio-political cleavages along racial, ethnic, and religious lines are frequently among the root causes of insurgency and can be a significant factor in the ultimate success or failure of the insurrection.³⁵ The past thirty-five years of conflict that have characterized Afghanistan are indeed rooted in a lack of ethnic, political, and ideological consensus that creates friction and turmoil. As was discussed earlier, the 1970s and 1980s were characterized by the political and ideological clash between communists and the Afghan Islamists. The 1990s witnessed the struggle for power, rooted predominately in ideological differences, between the former *mujahedin* warlords and the Taliban. Cleavages in Afghan society still exist today, most notably in the form of the Hazara, Tajik, and Uzbek people's animosity and resentment towards Pashtun rule.³⁶ However, these ethnic differences are somewhat muted because the majority of these ethnic groups are united in their desire to keep the Taliban from returning to power.³⁷ Indeed it was the rise of the Taliban that led the various non-Pashtun ethnic groups to unite. This union occurred in 1996 when the leaders of the Hazaras,

³⁵ Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (Dulles: Brassey's, Inc., 1990), 60.

³⁶ Marvin G. Weinbaum, *Afghanistan and its Neighbors: An Ever Dangerous Neighborhood* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2006), 9. Marvin G. Weinbaum is currently a scholar-in-residence at the Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C., and is professor emeritus of political science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Prior to his current roles, he served as an analyst for Pakistan and Afghanistan in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research from 1999 to 2003.

³⁷ Ali Jalali and Lester Grau, "Whither The Taliban," Foreign Military Studies Office, <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/taliban.htm> (accessed December 12, 2008). Mr. Jalali is the former Afghan Minister of Interior and the co-author of: Ali Jalali and Lester W. Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War* (Quantico: United States Marine Corps Studies and Analysis Division, 1996). Mr. Grau works the Foreign Military Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth, KS and is co-author of the aforementioned works with Ali Jalali, as well as Lester W. Grau, *The Bear Went Over the Mountain: Soviet Combat Tactics in Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1995).

Tajiks, and Uzbeks decided to stop fighting each other in order to form the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, later known as the Northern Alliance.³⁸

The next type of weakness within a government that will facilitate the growth of an insurgency is the government's lack of counterinsurgency warfare knowledge. When the Taliban first came to power in 1994, the preliminary UN-backed government, which had been ruling Afghanistan since the withdrawal of the Soviet Union, was dominated by former *mujahidin* warlords and had no knowledge, capability, or desire to conduct COIN operations. Even after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and the initiation of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the government's knowledge of COIN operations did not drastically improve.³⁹ Ahmed Rashid believed, largely due to the United States' lack of counterinsurgency experience, immediately after their ouster, the Taliban was able to flee Afghanistan and find safe-haven along with *al Qaeda* in Pakistan.⁴⁰ The escape of the Taliban and *al Qaeda* has likely facilitated the continuance of the insurgency in Afghanistan.

The final type of government weakness, as espoused by Galula, which facilitates insurrection is the government's inability to project power and control its population. Governments derive their power from the people when the people perceive that the government is looking out for their welfare and responding to their desires. Governments such as this are

³⁸ Eben Kaplan and Greg Bruno, "The Taliban in Afghanistan," *Council on Foreign Relations* (July 2, 2008). <http://www.cfr.org/publication/10551/> (accessed December 12, 2008).

³⁹ John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Prior to the initiation of OEF, the U.S. Army was not well versed in COIN doctrine. Its last attempt at it had resulted in a strategic failure in Vietnam. The reasons behind this failure are beyond the scope of this monograph, but for a further research on this topic see *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*. John Nagl is a former U.S. Army officer and expert on counterinsurgency operations, in his *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, he posits that the U.S. Army failed in Vietnam because its organizational culture was too strong. He states the army saw its purpose as winning wars through the application of firepower and maneuver. Continuing, Nagl believed the Army could not conceive of any other kind of war in which its weapons, technology, and organization could not destroy the enemy and usually could not even find him.

⁴⁰ Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Group, 2008), 91.

considered legitimate. Governments that are perceived by their people as being legitimate are not as subject to insurgencies as those that are not. For some societies, providing security and some basic services may be enough for the citizens to grant the government legitimacy. Indeed, according to the recent U.S. Army Field Manual (FM) 3-24 *Counterinsurgency*, the importance of security in situations where violence has escalated cannot be overemphasized.⁴¹ The provision of security is one of the primary means by which governments protect and control their populations and thus gain legitimacy. The four instruments through which governments can protect and control their populations are their political structure, their administrative bureaucracy, the police, and the armed forces.⁴²

Following the ideas of sociologist Max Weber, many schools of social science saw the state or the political structure in a pluralistic system as a neutral organization consisting of political institutions and recognized procedures for interpreting socio-political demands, resolving socio-political conflicts and converting them into outputs that satisfy those demands.⁴³ Bard O'Neill continued in a similar vein by saying that a government's political structure is the values, rules, and structures that make up the framework which guides and limits the making and executing of binding decisions for the state.⁴⁴ As has been previously stated, it is the Taliban's perceived illegitimacy of Afghanistan's political structure, and the government's inability to properly control the population in accordance with the Taliban's interpretation of Islam that is the primary motivation for their insurgency.

⁴¹ United States Department of the Army. FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, December 2006), 1-21.

⁴² Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 17.

⁴³ B.C. Smith, *Understanding Third World Politics: Theories of Political Change and Development*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2003), 109.

⁴⁴ Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 16.

Countries are run by their administrative bureaucracy. Often times this bureaucracy has a force of its own that is not related to the strength or weakness of the top political leadership. Since an insurgency is a bottom-up movement, an administrative vacuum at the local level, or an incompetent bureaucracy, will aid the insurgent.⁴⁵ From the time of the Soviet's withdrawal until the Bonn Agreement, Afghanistan had no government bureaucracy. This environment clearly provided protection to the Taliban as it rose to power and sought to establish its own control over the population of Afghanistan. Even now, largely due to the tribal nature of Afghanistan's society, severely restricted terrain, and lack of infrastructure, it is difficult for the central government to project power and control its population through legitimate bureaucratic functions. Thus, in portions of Afghanistan, the Taliban is still able to control the population and provide an outlet for the population's demands.⁴⁶

Another way in which the government controls the population is through the police. Police in Afghanistan have historically been seen as a coercive instrument of the state rather than public servants who are bound by and uphold the rule of law. This view has been exacerbated by the last thirty-five years of conflict.⁴⁷ In fact, prior to U.S. led invasion of Afghanistan, there had last been a national police force in the 1960s and 1970s; however, even then the police were used largely to protect the state from society. Once Afghanistan fell under the control of warlords after the withdrawal of the Soviet Union, the police were a combination of unwilling and unable to control the population. This lack of security and corruption facilitated the rise of the Taliban.

⁴⁵ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 19.

⁴⁶ Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Updated September 29, 2008, 23.

⁴⁷ International Crisis Group, "Reforming Afghanistan's Police." *International Crisis Group* (August, 30, 2007), 1, http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/asia/south_asia/138_reforming_afghanistan_s_police.pdf (accessed March 1, 2009).

Under the Taliban, policing included the Ministry of Enforcement of Virtue and Suppression of Vice, which violently enforced adherence to the Taliban's rigid interpretation of ultra-orthodox Wahhabism and Deobandism noted early.⁴⁸

After the fall of the Taliban in 2001, legitimate police and judicial systems had to be built almost from scratch. The state of the Afghan National Police (ANP) more than seven years later reflects a failure to grasp the magnitude of the requirement for reform in the law enforcement and justice sectors in the process of nation building.⁴⁹ That said, efforts to rebuild a competent, loyal, and capable national police force in Afghanistan are increasingly successful though they have a long way to go to rid the police of corruption, whether real or perceived.⁵⁰

The final manner in which the government projects power and controls its population is through its armed forces. Today, Afghanistan is recreating its national military for the fourth time in 150 years.⁵¹ Few of Afghanistan's armies have ever successfully monopolized the legitimate use of force. Instead, the country has historically relied on popular uprisings to fight foreign invasions. Since its inception, Afghanistan has been a loose combination of tribes and ethnic communities over which the central government had varying degrees of control. This lack of

⁴⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁹ United States Department of the Army. FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Washington, D.C.: GPO, December 2006, 5-15. FM 3-24 provides a discussion on the requirement for controlling police activities and the establishment and enforcement of the rule of law in the sub section titled *Support Development of Better Governance*.

⁵⁰ Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Updated September 29, 2008, 37.

⁵¹ Ali A. Jalali, "Rebuilding Afghanistan's National Army," *Parameters* (Autumn 2002): 72-73. In the 1870s Amir Sher Ali Khan recreated the Afghan army that disintegrated during the second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-80). In the 1880s Amir Abdur Rahman reestablished the army to unify the fragmented country. The army was remodeled under King Amanullah following the third Anglo-Afghan War (1919), but it was destroyed during the civil war of 1929. A new military was created by Nades Shah after his accession in 1929. The Soviet-sponsored reorganization and modernization of the Afghan army began in the 1960s and continued through the Moscow-backed communist rule. It was totally disintegrated during the civil war of 1992-2001. Mr. Jalali's "Rebuilding Afghanistan's National Army" provides an excellent review of the history of the Afghan National Army.

integration has made the communities, particularly in tribal areas, semi-independent and mostly reliant on their own resources and their own traditional institutions. This includes local military forces that have traditionally been mobilized during inter-tribal conflicts or in the face of foreign threats. Being a “nation-in-arms” has helped the country survive when the central government collapsed or the national army disintegrated when confronted with foreign invasion. However, these historical and social factors such as the limited influence of the central government, ethnic rivalries, and corruption contribute the difficult task of rebuilding the Afghan National Army (ANA).⁵²

Geographic Conditions: A Significant Limiting Factor

Military professionals are well aware of the significant role the specific geographic conditions play during every war. Revolutionary war theorists believe this significance is even more pronounced during a revolutionary war.⁵³ The specific variables that must be considered when evaluating the geographic conditions present during an insurgency are the country’s location, international borders, terrain, population, and transportation-communications network. Accordingly, each of these variables will be evaluated as they relate to the current situation in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is a land-locked country located in the center of the Asian land mass at the strategic crossroads of Middle Eastern, Central Asian, South Asian, East Asian, and Eurasian cultures. As such, for centuries Afghanistan has been a key trade and invasion route for numerous empires.⁵⁴ Today, however, many factors integrate Afghanistan socially within the region. The

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Galula refers to this subject as ‘geographic conditions’, while O’Neill uses the term ‘physical environment’. Both theorists refer to the same ideas and both place special significance on the subject.

⁵⁴ Thomas A. Bruscino, Jr., *Out of Bounds: Transnational Sanctuary in Irregular Warfare* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Global War on Terrorism Occasional Paper 17, 2006), 50. Dr. Bruscino is a professor at

country's diverse population of Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras, is indicative of the close ethnic, linguistic, sectarian, and cultural links Afghanistan maintains with the six countries that share its border. Nonetheless, the neighbors of Afghanistan have regularly intervened in its politics and economy in an effort to promote their own strategic, ideological, and economic interests. For example, it is in Pakistan's interest to gain an advantage in Afghanistan. That advantage comes in the form of strategic depth provided to Pakistan by a friendly Afghanistan in the event of an attack by Pakistan's traditional enemy, India. Additionally, Pakistan has used the border region as a training ground and safe haven for Islamic militants, a charge which Pakistan denies, in order to assist them in fighting a proxy war with India in Kashmir.⁵⁵

According to prevailing counterinsurgency theory, the border area is a permanent source of weakness for the counterinsurgent. By moving from one side of the border to the other, the insurgent is often able to escape pressure or at least complicate operations for the counterinsurgent.⁵⁶ Drawn in 1893 following the Second Anglo-Afghan War, the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, known as the Durand Line, demarcated the frontier between British India and Afghanistan.⁵⁷ Sir Henry Mortimer Durand drew the line after negotiations between the British government and Afghan King Abdur Rahman Khan. Their agreement called for there to be a three-tiered border to separate the British Empire from Russia. The first frontier was

the United States Army Command and General Staff College's School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS). Prior to joining SAMS, Dr. Bruscino worked at the Combat Studies Institute at Ft. Leavenworth, KS, and at the U.S. Army Center for Military History in Washington, D.C. prior to that. His articles and review essays have appeared in the *Claremont Review of Books*, *Journal of America's Military Past*, *San Luis Valley Historian*, and *Reviews in American History*.

⁵⁵ Marvin G. Weinbaum, *Afghanistan and its Neighbors: An Ever Dangerous Neighborhood* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2006), 6.

⁵⁶ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 23; Thomas A. Bruscino, Jr., *Out of Bounds: Transnational Sanctuary in Irregular Warfare* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Global War on Terrorism Occasional Paper 17, 2006), 1; Bernard F. Fall, *Street Without Joy*, 4th ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 375-377.

⁵⁷ The Durand Line was originally signed as a treaty, which was to last for 100 years.

designed to separate the areas of British controlled British East India from the areas under Pashtun control. Today this line divides the Pakistani state from the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). The second frontier, the Durand Line, divided the Pashtun tribal areas from the territories under Afghanistan's control. This is now the disputed border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. The third and final frontier was Afghanistan's border with Russia, Iran, and China, and it demarcated the British sphere of influence.⁵⁸

With respect to the Taliban, the most significant of these borders is the border with Pakistan. Stretching nearly 1,500 miles, or approximately the distance from Boston to Miami, this border allows the Taliban, as well as other insurgent groups, to find a cross-border sanctuary from which to base and launch their attacks. Compounding this problem of cross-border sanctuary is the fact that the Pashtun people inhabit the border region. The Pashtuns are the majority ethnic group of both Afghanistan and the tribal areas of western Pakistan. Indeed, the Taliban formed in Pakistan, and with the aid of the Pashtun tribal culture known as *pashtunwali*, have been able to find sympathy and sanctuary amongst their ethnic brothers in Pakistan.⁵⁹ This is problematic because according to Galula, longer borders, particularly if the neighboring countries are sympathetic to the insurgents, favor the insurgent.⁶⁰

The next variable to analyze when considering the geographic conditions during an insurgency is the terrain. Afghanistan's terrain is characterized by mountainous areas and desert

⁵⁸ Barnett Rubin, "Saving Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2007), <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20070101faessay86105/barnett-r-rubin/saving-afghanistan.html> (accessed November 23, 2008). Barnett R. Rubin is Director of Studies and a Senior Fellow at New York University's Center on International Cooperation. He served as an adviser to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General at the UN Talks on Afghanistan in Bonn in 2001 and has been reported to be a member of President Obama's new strategy team for Afghanistan.

⁵⁹ Robert D. Kaplan, *Soldiers of God: With Islamic Warriors in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 136. The principle precepts of Pashtunwali are *nang* (pride), *badal* (revenge), and *melmastia* (hospitality).

⁶⁰ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 23.

plateaus which are favorable to insurgent groups. The Afghan mountain mass, which is an extension of the Himalayas, is oriented from southwest to northeast. The Hindu Kush Mountains form the majority of these mountains. The Hindu Kush extend for almost 620 miles, which is approximately the distance from Washington D.C. to Atlanta. The highest peaks, which exceed 21,700 feet, exist in the east near Afghanistan's border with Pakistan. Smaller mountain systems spread out north, south, and west from the Hindu Kush. Of the total land area of Afghanistan, 50 percent of it lies above 6,200 feet elevation. The largest deserts are located in the west and south west of the country. These areas often suffer from intense heat, drought, and sandstorms.⁶¹

Rugged terrain, such as the mountains that span the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan, is usually conducive to successful guerilla operations, because it hinders movement by the counterinsurgent and provides inaccessible bases for the guerilla. For example, the high elevations found along the border limit the ability of helicopters to operate with their maximum payloads. Furthermore, the severely restricted terrain of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border is characterized by hundreds of mountain passes that facilitate the infiltration and exfiltration of the various insurgent groups. Another important aspect of restricted and severely restricted terrain is that it provides the insurgent with areas in which to conceal their bases. O'Neill states that bases are critical to the success of guerilla warfare. Secluded permanent base areas, such as the ones used in Afghanistan and across the border in Pakistan, allow the insurgent to plan, train, rest, recuperate, marshal equipment, and to organize the people in relative security.⁶² When the areas favoring guerilla warfare are extensive and the insurgent takes advantage of this to expand their

⁶¹ Scott R. McMichael, *Stumbling Bear: Soviet Military Performance in Afghanistan* (London: Brassey's, Inc., 1991), 20. Scott R. McMichael is a retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel and is currently a director and regional manager for System Studies & Simulation, Inc. He has supported U.S. Army TRADOC as the senior concept developer for several years and is the primary author of the Army's future capstone concept, TRADOC PAM 525-3-0, *The Army in Joint Operations*. A former artillery officer and Soviet foreign area officer, LTC McMichael publishes widely in defense journals.

⁶² Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (Dulles: Brassey's, Inc., 1990), 56.

operations, the counterinsurgent will find it increasingly difficult to defend its government, protect the population, and to concentrate troops and firepower.⁶³

Counterinsurgency operations are a battle with the insurgent for the will of the people. Accordingly, it is essential to evaluate the population when analyzing the conditions under which an insurgency is operating. Much like the size of the country, if the size of the population is large it is more difficult to control them. However, the total number of inhabitants is not the sole variable that should be analyzed with respect to the population. Counterinsurgency theory holds that the more significant factors weighing on the population are the population density and physical distribution of the population.⁶⁴ The more scattered the population, the better it is for the insurgent. Conversely, where the population is small and concentrated, it is easier to control the people and sever its ties to the insurgency. With respect to their physical distribution, a high ratio of rural to urban population is an advantage to the insurgent. However, when the majority of the population lives in the urban areas, the situation is favorable for the counterinsurgent. Thus, an underdeveloped rural society is a better demography for the insurgent.⁶⁵ This is the precise demographic condition that encompasses the Afghanistan-Pakistan border where the Taliban insurgency is its strongest.

While it may seem paradoxical, the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region is both rural and densely populated. On the Pakistan side of the border, where the Taliban and *al Qaeda* find their

⁶³ C.E.S. Dudley, "Subversive Warfare-Five Military Factors," *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal* (July 1968), 209.

⁶⁴ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 24; and Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 59.

⁶⁵ Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 59.

safe-haven, the FATA and NWFP span nearly forty-thousand square miles.⁶⁶ This is an area approximately the same size as Kentucky. However, with almost twenty million people, the FATA and NWFP are nearly five times more populated than Kentucky. Population density such as this, along with strong familial ties, offers the Taliban and *al Qaeda* exceptional concealment from government forces.

The final variable that must be considered when analyzing the evaluation criteria of geographic conditions is the countries transportation and communications network. Bard O'Neill states that in large countries experiencing a rural insurgency, such as Afghanistan, the state of the transportation-communications system can have a significant bearing on the outcome of an insurrection. Poor roads, rail networks, and river transport systems along with inadequate communications networks favor the insurgent. When these conditions are present, the ability of the government to provide security to the villages, cities, towns, etc., is significantly strained.⁶⁷

Afghanistan's transportation and communications network is underdeveloped and restricted by the terrain. This characteristic makes contact between areas very difficult. For many years, Afghanistan's rulers intentionally left the transportation system underdeveloped because they believed the difficulties of movement would enhance Afghanistan's defenses.⁶⁸ However, since the Soviet withdrawal, numerous countries and international institutions, to include the United States, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Iran, India, Japan, Germany, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the European Union (EU) have all invested in the

⁶⁶ STRATFOR TODAY, "Afghanistan, Pakistan: The Battlespace of the Border", Stratfor: Global Intelligence, http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20081014_afghanistan_pakistan_battlespace_border (accessed October 22, 2008).

⁶⁷ Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare* (Dulles: Brassey's, Inc., 1990), 58.

⁶⁸ Scott R. McMichael, *Stumbling Bear: Soviet Military Performance in Afghanistan* (London: Brassey's, Inc., 1991), 21.

development of Afghanistan's infrastructure.⁶⁹ That said, Afghanistan's transportation and communications network remains sparse and less than one-third of the roads are paved. Because the counterinsurgent forces must utilize the roads in order to move their equipment, the roads become a limiting factor and easy ambush sites for the Taliban.

Outside Support: Active Sanctuary in Pakistan

The final evaluation criteria used for understanding the conditions under which insurgent groups operate is outside support. Even with substantial popular support, the ability of the insurgent to combat government forces effectively usually requires various kinds of outside assistance. In fact, FM 3-24 states, insurgencies rely heavily on freedom of movement across porous borders, and usually cannot sustain themselves without substantial external support.⁷⁰ This is largely because, as O'Neill posits, the beleaguered government itself is probably receiving outside assistance, which in some cases can compensate for their lack of popularity. During the Cold War, the practice of providing outside support to the enemy of one's enemy became commonplace. The threat of nuclear war prevented nuclear powers from facing each other directly and instead led to the practice of supporting proxies to push their agendas and achieve their interests. The most appropriate example of this is the aforementioned support the U.S. and Pakistan provided to the *mujahedin* during their war against the Soviets in the 1980s. While the practice of insurgent forces receiving support from a sympathetic government is the most common, this is not the only means by which insurgent groups receive outside support. Facing a long struggle against government forces, insurgents may also turn to other insurgent movements such as *al Qaeda*, private institutions in other states such as Pakistan's ISI, and international

⁶⁹ Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Updated September 29, 2008, 43-44, 47-53.

⁷⁰ United States Department of the Army. FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Washington, D.C.: GPO, December 2006, 1-18.

organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood in order to increase their political and military capabilities.⁷¹ The forms of support provided by these outside actors are as numerous as the conflicts themselves. However, in the case of Afghanistan, the most significant type of outside support that benefits the Taliban is the provision of sanctuary.

It is a certainty that the Taliban, as well as *al Qaeda* and numerous other Islamic militant groups, benefits from sanctuary in Pakistan. Bernard F. Fall, the renowned author and observer of insurgencies, coined the term ‘active sanctuary’ to describe a territory that is contiguous to a rebel area which, though not actually involved in the conflict, provides the insurgent side with shelter, training facilities, equipment, and potentially troops.⁷² These sanctuaries facilitate and expedite the assembling and moving of men and supplies to the battle zone. As was previously stated, the Taliban found a sanctuary like this amongst their Pashtun brothers in the FATA on the Pakistan side of the border following the United States led invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11.

The Pashtun tribes in the FATA live under a uniquely oppressive administrative system that is a holdover from the British Raj, which was noted earlier as being a major source of discontent amongst the people and thus a source of influence for the Taliban. It was the population’s dissatisfaction with this system, according to the Pakistani government, that led them to recently allow the Taliban to govern the FATA’s Bajaur agency in the Swat Valley using *sharia* law.⁷³ Under the FATA’s administrative system, the FATA is designated as a federal area

⁷¹ Bard O’Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 139-142. As these examples allude, in the 1990s it became apparent that Islamic militant groups were benefiting from various social groups, charities, and wealthy private benefactors, especially in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the Persian Gulf emirates.

⁷² Bernard F. Fall, *Street Without Joy*, 4th ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 375. Bernard Fall devoted many years of his later life to bringing attention to the problems of Southeast Asia, and in the process became one of America’s most esteemed authorities on Vietnam. He died under fire in South Vietnam in 1967.

⁷³ Pamela Constable, “Islamic Law Instituted in Pakistan’s Swat Valley,” *The Washington Post*, February 17, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/16/AR2009021601063.html> (accessed March 15, 2009); Chris Brummitt,

directly under the rule of the President of Pakistan. The President of Pakistan utilizes the governor of the North West Frontier Province to act as his agent in the FATA. The governor of the North West Frontier Province then appoints senior bureaucrats, known as ‘political agents’, to each of the FATA’s seven tribal agencies. These political agents utilize the “Frontier Crimes Regulation” (FCR), also a holdover from the days of British rule, as the legal system of the FATA. The FCR allows the political agent to impose collective punishment for crimes that are committed by individuals and to issue prison sentences without due process or right of appeal. As might be expected, this form of governance is accompanied by corruption. For example, the FATA’s tribal leaders, known as *maliks*, are often given economic incentives by the political agent in exchange for their loyalty. Also under the FCR, political parties are prevented from operating in the FATA thereby giving the power of influence to the *mullahs* and religious parties. The Pakistan Army, perhaps more specifically the ISI, has used the government structure in the FATA to facilitate their support of the Taliban and other militant groups. Indeed, since escaping to the Pakistan, members of the Taliban have advanced into leadership roles in the tribal areas of North and South Waziristan inside the NWFP, as well as in the Bajaur agency inside the FATA. Inside the tribal areas and under the pretense of its government structure, the Taliban has found sanctuary and provides safe-haven to *al Qaeda* and the Kashmir separatist groups that help Pakistan fight its proxy war against India.⁷⁴

“Taliban Says Cease-Fire Will Continue,” *The Washington Post*, February 25, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/24/AR2009022400390.html> (accessed March 15, 2009).

⁷⁴ Carin Zissis and Jayshree Bajora. "Pakistan's Tribal Areas," *Council on Foreign Relations* (October 26, 2007), http://www.cfr.org/publication/11973/pakistans_tribal_areas.html (accessed September 23, 2008).

Conclusion

The active sanctuary that exists in Pakistan for the Taliban is one of the most significant factors preventing the United States from achieving its strategic objectives in Afghanistan.

Bernard Fall stated, “In brutal fact, the success or failure of all rebellions since World War II depended entirely on whether the active sanctuary was willing and able to perform its expected role.”⁷⁵ Further complicating this situation is the fact that inside this active sanctuary the Taliban provides safe haven for *al Qaeda* and numerous other Islamic militant groups. These organizations utilize this sanctuary in order to plan, train, and launch their attacks on their respective targets. Without eradicating this sanctuary, the U.S. will be unable to achieve its strategic objectives in the region.

However, the Taliban’s active sanctuary is not the only problem inhibiting the Afghan government from gaining legitimacy in the eyes of its people. The inability to protect and control the population within the borders of Afghanistan is the most significant weakness within the government that allows the Taliban to persist. The primary means by which the government can protect and control its population is through its police and its army. The police in Afghanistan have historically been seen as a coercive instrument of the state rather than public servants who are bound by and uphold the rule of law. This view has been exacerbated by the last thirty-five years of conflict. Another manner in which the government of Afghanistan can project power and control its population is through its armed forces. However, few of Afghanistan’s armies have ever successfully monopolized the legitimate use of force. The disparate ethnic composition and tribal nature of the Afghan population, combined with the country’s lack of infrastructure, has historically limited the influence of the central government and further complicates the difficult task of rebuilding the Afghan National Army (ANA).

⁷⁵ Bernard F. Fall, *Street Without Joy*, 4th ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 376.

As the previous paragraph alluded, the status of Afghanistan's transportation and communications network limits the influence of the central government and plays a vital role in determining the ability of the counterinsurgent forces to combat the Taliban. The transportation-communications structure of Afghanistan, which is significantly underdeveloped and restricted by the terrain, makes contact and transportation between populated areas very difficult. Despite international efforts to improve it, Afghanistan's transportation network remains sparse and less than one-third of the roads are paved. Ultimately, this lack of transportation and communications network limits the ability of Afghanistan's central government to protect and control the population.

Perhaps nowhere is the lack of a transportation network more significant than along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Due to the severely restricted terrain in this area, the establishment of the infrastructure necessary to allow the government to protect and control the population therein is difficult to say the least. Compounding this problem is the fact that the Pashtuns are the majority ethnic group that inhabits both sides of this border. Indeed, the Pashtun-dominated Taliban formed on the Pakistan side of the border, and with the aid of the Pashtun tribal culture of *pashtunwali*, have been able to benefit from an active sanctuary in Pakistan. Moreover, women of these Pashtun tribes have intermarried with the Taliban and *al Qaeda*, which, under *pashtunwali*, obligates the tribes to protect these militants. These relationships makes Afghanistan's and Pakistan's ability to separate the population from the Taliban and *al Qaeda* ever more difficult. Also, complicating the situation amongst the Pashtun border tribes is the fact that the border region of Pakistan and Afghanistan is characterized by rugged terrain and is both rural and densely populated. Density such as this, along with the severely restricted terrain and strong familial ties, offers the Taliban and *al Qaeda* exceptional concealment from government forces.

The previous analysis of Afghanistan has illuminated the fact that the situation in Afghanistan is unique and that any comparison to other insurgencies would be cursory at best.

Indeed, the problems in Afghanistan are not limited to just Afghanistan. Instead, the problems extend to all of Afghanistan's immediate neighbors as well as, among others, the United States, NATO, Russia, Iran, and India. However, perhaps nowhere are the problems more pronounced than in Pakistan. Pakistan's relationships with Afghanistan and the rest of the world are embroiled in Pakistan's fears that it is isolated against an existential threat in India and its distrust of the United States.⁷⁶ This fear has led Pakistan to pursue policies that have further complicated the situation in the region and created domestic turmoil that causes Pakistan to view the Taliban and its border region with Afghanistan from a different perspective than the United States. Pakistan's fears have created a situation where the Taliban, which is a local insurgent group, has been allowed to find sanctuary in Pakistan's tribal areas from which it continues to attempt to undermine the elected government in Kabul. This problem is compounded by the fact that the Taliban provides safe haven to *al Qaeda*, a global insurgent group, and several other Kashmiri separatist groups, all of which have historically received support from Pakistan. Furthermore, the government of Afghanistan's ability to project legitimate power and thus combat the Taliban is limited by Afghanistan's dismal transportation and communications network, the weakness of their newly formed government and security forces, the population that inhabits the Afghan-Pakistan border region, and the active sanctuary the Taliban enjoys in Pakistan. With that said, if the United States is going to achieve its strategic objectives in the region, it is essential that the U.S. utilize its resources provided by the elements of national power and place Pakistan at the forefront of its strategy for the region.

⁷⁶ Daniel Markey, *Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt: Council Special Report 36* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations Center for Preventive Action, August 2008), 22-23.

Recommendations

FM 3-24 states that the primary objective of any COIN operation is “to foster development of effective governance by a legitimate government. Counterinsurgents achieve this objective by the balanced application of both military and nonmilitary means.”⁷⁷ Legitimacy makes it easier for a state to govern, and allows them to manage, coordinate, and sustain collective security as well as political, economic, and social development. While the military element of national power can address the symptoms of a loss of legitimacy, it requires all of the instruments of national power in order to form a durable and lasting peace. In the words of David Kilcullen, “To be effective, (the United States) must marshal not only all agencies of the USG, but also all agencies of a host nation, multiple foreign allies and coalition partners, international institutions, non-government organizations of many national and political flavors, international and local media, religious and community groups, charities and businesses.”⁷⁸ It is in the spirit of Dr. Kilcullen’s advice that the United States and its allies must utilize both direct and indirect approaches and capitalize on their diplomatic, information operations, military, and economic resources in order to expand Afghanistan’s transportation and communications network, help mitigate and overcome the weaknesses in the Afghanistan government, influence the populations of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and prevent the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region from being utilized as an active sanctuary in order to achieve its strategic objectives in the region.

⁷⁷ United States Department of the Army. FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Washington, D.C.: GPO, December 2006, 1-21.

⁷⁸ David Kilcullen. “Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency” (lecture, U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Conference, Washington D.C. September 28, 2006). David Kilcullen is the Chief Strategist for the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism in the U.S. Department of State. Dr. Kilcullen is also the author of David Kilcullen, “Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-Level Counterinsurgency,” *Military Review* (May-June 2006); and “Appendix A: A Guide for Action.” In United States Department of the Army. FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Washington, D.C.: GPO, December 2006. Dr. Kilcullen was also an advisor to GEN. Petraeus and Multi-National Forces Iraq during 2007.

Diplomacy

With respect to Central Asia, the first diplomatic initiative that the United States should undertake is to determine what its strategic objectives are in the region. The U.S. should then draft a strategy to accomplish these objectives that focuses on the government of Pakistan and addresses the active sanctuary in Pakistan that protects the Taliban and its associated militant groups. President Obama should then publicly announce this strategy in a primetime speech.⁷⁹ Drafting and announcing this strategy will serve many purposes. Most notably, these actions will provide the American public with the knowledge of why the region matters to the United States. Another benefit of announcing this strategy is that it will help unify the actions of the United States Government (USG). One of the many criticisms of U.S. operations since 9/11 is that they are disconnected from each other and a larger strategic objective. The final benefit of this strategy is that it will convey to the governments of the region, and indeed the wider world, that the United States is committed to a long term relationship with the countries of Central and South Asia, most specifically Afghanistan and Pakistan. By doing this, the United States will perhaps be able to begin the process of assuaging Pakistan's fears of isolation and minimizing their belief that they need to maintain the active sanctuary that exists in its tribal areas in order to pursue their own agenda in Afghanistan and India at the expense of other nations.

The next diplomatic initiative that the United States should pursue is a proposition that NATO's North Atlantic Council open a diplomatic mission in Islamabad.⁸⁰ Doing this will better

⁷⁹ Daniel Markey, *Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt*. Council Special Report No. 36, New York: Council on Foreign Relations Center for Preventive Action, 2008., 46.

⁸⁰ Ibid. NATO's North Atlantic Council has effective political authority and powers of decision, and consists of permanent representatives of all member countries meeting together at least once a week. The Council has an important public profile and issues declarations and communiqués explaining the NATO's policies and decisions to the public and to governments of non-member countries. The Council provides a unique forum of wide-ranging consultation between member governments on all issues affecting their security and is the most important decision-making body in NATO.

facilitate NATO's capacity for cross-border analysis and planning. Moreover, this is one more step towards calming Pakistan's fears of isolation and reassuring them that the west has a long-term commitment to the region. As has been previously stated, alleviated Pakistan's fears of isolation will be essential if the U.S. hopes to prevent the Afghan-Pakistan border from being used as an active sanctuary. Finally, this initiative will also allow more NATO nations to assist in the mission in Afghanistan by allowing them the opportunity to fill positions in the diplomatic mission.

The U.S. should also quietly engage Iran, Russia, China, and India over the future of region. Bard O'Neill posits that through quiet diplomacy counterinsurgents can exploit important common interests with various other interested parties.⁸¹ In the case of Afghanistan and the larger region, each of these governments have their own specific interests which the United States can exploit during negotiations. Moreover, each of the aforementioned countries have at various times been involved in pursuing their own agendas in Afghanistan and Pakistan, often at the expense of other nations. These past dealings will likely cause Iran, Russia, China, and India to be unwilling to publicly negotiate or otherwise publicly assume different positions than the ones that they have historically held. Through the use of quiet diplomacy the United States will perhaps be more able to exploit their common interests with these nations in order to achieve its desired strategic objectives.

While the United States has not had normal direct diplomatic relations with Iran since 1980, it may be necessary for the U.S. to negotiate with Iran if the U.S. is to achieve its strategic objectives in the region.⁸² Clearly, other issues such as Iran's position towards Israel, their

⁸¹ Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 184.

⁸² United States State Department, "Iran," U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5314.htm> (accessed March 5, 2009). On April 7, 1980, the United States broke diplomatic relations with Iran, and on April 24, 1981, the Swiss Government assumed representation

support for Hezbollah, their actions in Iraq, and their pursuit of nuclear weapons are all obstacles to this discussion; however, the United States and Iran do share common interests with respect to Iran's eastern border. Iran is in a position to gain economically if Pakistan is secure enough for the construction of the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline, which has been on hold since the Mumbai attacks in November 2008. Additionally, because of Afghanistan's heroin production along Iran's border, Iran has the world's worst heroin problem with approximately three million drug users.⁸³ Perhaps the United States' and Iran's mutual interests in Afghanistan are enough to facilitate the initiation of quiet negotiations that will secure Iran's continued financial support of the expansion of Afghanistan's transportation network and prevent Iran from feeling as though they need to shift their support from President Karzai to the Taliban.⁸⁴

Another nation the United States needs to quietly negotiate with is Russia. While Russia provides some humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, one of Russia's primary concerns in the region is the Chechen fighters who are training in Pakistan alongside *al Qaeda* and the Taliban. Based on

of U.S. interests in Tehran. The Government of Pakistan represents Iranian interests in the United States. The Islamic Republic of Iran has a large Interests Section in the Pakistani Embassy in Washington, DC and a permanent mission to the United Nations in New York City. Despite breaking diplomatic relations, the United States has held discussions with Iranian representatives on particular issues of concern over the years. For example, U.S. and Iranian envoys cooperated during operations to overthrow the Taliban in 2001 and during the Bonn Conference in 2002. Additionally, the Secretary of State, her Iranian counterpart, and others met at talks on Iraq in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, on May 3, 2007. The American and Iranian ambassadors to Iraq took part in face-to-face discussions in Baghdad, with Iraqi officials in attendance, on May 28, 2007. Representatives from the three countries engaged in a second round of talks on July 24, 2007. Ambassadors met for a third discussion on August 6, 2007. The United States believes, however, that normal relations are impossible until Iran's policies change.

⁸³ Lionel Beehner, "Afghanistan's Role in Iran's Drug Problem," *Council on Foreign Relations* (September 14, 2006). <http://www.cfr.org/publication/11457/> (accessed December 12, 2008).

⁸⁴ Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Updated September 29, 2008, 43. According to Katzman, Iran has given Afghanistan \$205 million since the fall of the Taliban primarily to build roads and schools and provide electricity and shops to Afghan cities and villages near their shared border. Furthermore, Iran is said to be helping Afghan law enforcement with anti-narcotics operations along their border. Despite this assistance, as recently as 2007, NATO officers have captured arms shipments originating in Iran and bound for the Taliban. Some experts believe that Iran may shift its policy in Afghanistan in order to gain leverage against the U.S. and cause U.S. combat deaths.

Kyrgyzstan's recent decision to shut down the Manas air base, it is apparent that Russia still wields powerful influence in the region. Accordingly, the U.S. should quietly negotiate with Russia to ensure that Russia does not try to further undermine U.S. efforts in the region, and assure Russia that the United States' interests in Afghanistan and Pakistan do not include destabilizing Russia. By engaging the Russians, the U.S. will be able to secure a powerful ally who maintains significant influence amongst the Central Asian states. More specifically, by partnering with the Russians, the U.S. will likely be able to secure an important ally when it comes to influencing the Central Asian states to support many of the transportation and communications projects and resource pipelines that both China and India would like to pursue. Furthermore, by maintaining an open dialogue with the Russians, the United States will be able to pursue their strategic objectives in the region without the risk of Russia misinterpreting U.S. actions and intentions.

The next government that the United States should quietly engage is China. While China only shares a small fifty miles wide and virtually impassable border with Afghanistan, it is in China's interest that Afghanistan and, perhaps more specifically, Pakistan are stable. China's interest in Afghanistan increased during the time when the Taliban ruled. The Taliban has reportedly provided sanctuary to Chinese Uighurs from China's Xinjiang province who tried to start an insurgency among southwest China's Muslim population.⁸⁵ With respect to Pakistan, China is one of its oldest allies. China and Pakistan share the same anti-India position. Moreover, it is likely that China helped Pakistan test a nuclear weapon inside China in May 1990.⁸⁶ That aside, China has an interest in peace in the region because it desires a north-south energy and trade corridor to transport its goods from Xinjiang to the Arabian Sea ports of Pakistan and so oil

⁸⁵ Marvin G. Weinbaum, *Afghanistan and its Neighbors: An Ever Dangerous Neighborhood* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2006), 16.

⁸⁶ Jayshree Bajoria, "Pakistan's All Weather Ally", *Council on Foreign Relations* (September 18, 2008), http://www.cfr.org/publication/17267/pakistans_all_weather_ally.html (accessed September 18, 2008).

and gas pipelines can carry energy from the Persian Gulf and Iran to China. In return for this corridor, China could help deliver much needed electricity and water to both Afghanistan and Pakistan. This corridor could also help the legitimate economies of both countries. Furthermore, China stands to become the largest investor in Afghanistan, with a \$3.5 billion stake in the Aynak copper mine, south of Kabul.⁸⁷ It is possible that by negotiating with China the U.S. could increase China's investment in Afghanistan's transportation and communications network as well as its energy pipelines, and thus assist in the development of Afghanistan's legitimate economy. It is further possible that these negotiations could lead to increased cooperation amongst the two powers in other parts of the world.

The other regional power that the U.S. should quietly engage is India. India and the United States are allies and share common interest in Afghanistan. Indeed, India has already funded \$750 million in projects in Afghanistan. India is also partnered with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to finance a \$300 million project to bring electricity from Central Asia to Afghanistan.⁸⁸ However, not all of India's goals in Afghanistan are completely altruistic. India wants to deny Pakistan the strategic depth that it so desires in Afghanistan and Pakistan accuses India of trying to use its nine consulates in Afghanistan to spread its influence. By continuing to partner with India the United States could secure the continued support of India and its efforts to help build the transportation and communications network in Afghanistan. Also, through continued engagement, the United States could perhaps help negotiate a peace deal between India and Pakistan over the disputed Kashmir region. By resolving this issue, Pakistan will potentially

⁸⁷ Barnett R. Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, 2008. From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan and Pakistan. *Foreign Affairs* (November/December): 40.

⁸⁸ Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Updated September 29, 2008, 45.

feel less inclined to harbor, train, and equip the Kashmiri separatist groups that utilize Pakistan's tribal region as an active sanctuary.

The final diplomatic effort the United States should undertake is to continue to work with the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan. While this might seem like an obvious statement, some would suggest that it is time for the U.S. to restructure its relationship with Pakistan and Afghanistan's President Karzai. If the United States were to decide to conduct a unilateral intervention into Pakistan, it would only serve to confirm Pakistan's fears and feelings of distrust.⁸⁹ Similarly, if the United States were to shift positions on Afghan President Hamid Karzai, due primarily to his connection to corruption and the illegal drug trade, it likely would only deepen the perception that the government of Afghanistan is a puppet of the U.S. and would add fuel to the rhetoric of the Taliban and *al Qaeda*. More poignantly, if the U.S. were to withdraw its support for Karzai it would likely irreparably delegitimize the Afghan government.

In an effort to eradicate the active sanctuary that exists in Pakistan's tribal areas, the United States should lend public support to FATA reform measures, including extension of the Political Parties Act and FCR amendment. Extension of the Political Parties Act in the FATA could enable national political parties to compete for seats as they do throughout Pakistan's other provinces. According to Daniel Markey, this would begin the process of political normalization and integration in the FATA. Amendment of the FCR would allow limited judicial appeal of decisions made by political agents. This limited right to appeal would empower legitimately aggrieved tribesmen and introduce a higher degree of responsibility among the political agents without immediately destabilizing the existing administrative structure.⁹⁰ Finally, the U.S. should

⁸⁹ Daniel Markey, *Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt*. Council Special Report No. 36, New York: Council on Foreign Relations Center for Preventive Action, 2008., 30.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 35. This recommendation suffered a recent setback after the peace agreement between the government of Pakistan and the Taliban in the Bajaur agency of the FATA.

invite the leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan to a summit in the United States. This would be a public demonstration of the United States' dedication to the region and an opportunity for the United States to negotiate with Afghanistan and Pakistan over issues such as Afghanistan's illegal drug trade and Pakistan's governmental policies in the FATA.

Information

FM 3-24 states that information operations may be decisive in a counterinsurgency. By shaping the information environment, the USG can set the conditions for the other instruments of national power.⁹¹ With respect to the external support that Taliban and *al Qaeda* receive, the principle aim of the information instrument of national power is to provide ideas, data, and arguments that will influence various audiences that external support to insurgent groups is not in their best interests.⁹² In order to shape the information environment the first initiative the USG should implement is the announcement of the previously noted strategy for the region in conjunction with a statement professing long-term commitment. The second initiative is to continue to renounce *al Qaeda* and their actions. The final information initiative that the USG should implement is to publicly separate the Taliban from *al Qaeda* and Kashmiri separatist groups.

As has been previously stated, the United States should first and foremost develop a strategy for the region and then publicly announce that strategy in a primetime speech by the President. Several of the benefits of announcing this strategy have already been noted and need not be restated here. However, it is necessary to restate the primary reason for announcing this strategy. By announcing the strategy, the United States will send the message to the region,

⁹¹ United States Department of the Army. FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Washington, D.C.: GPO, December 2006, 5-8.

⁹² Bard O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 184.

perhaps most specifically Pakistan, that the U.S. is committed for the long term. This commitment will be the first step in convincing Pakistan, other nations, private institutions, and individuals that there is no need for them to continue to harbor, train, finance, and equip terrorists and militants within the borders of Pakistan in an effort to pursue their own agendas in the event the United States loses interest in the region.

The second information initiative the United States should utilize is to continue to renounce *al Qaeda*, its actions, and its supporters. The goal of this type of message is to create distrust between *al Qaeda* and their external supporters by stressing their differences and past antagonisms.⁹³ The United States should not only try to influence the populations of Afghanistan and Pakistan but also the Taliban. The Taliban has been providing safe haven to *al Qaeda* since the 1990s. It now appears that the Taliban, which is a local insurgent group, may be able to be separated from *al Qaeda*, which is a global insurgent group.⁹⁴ By separating these two organizations, it may be possible to reconcile with the Taliban.

The separation of the Taliban and *al Qaeda* leads to the final information initiative the U.S. should pursue and that is to change its rhetoric about the Taliban, *al Qaeda*, and the aforementioned Kashmiri militants. These groups are not the same and should not be categorized as such. By changing its rhetoric, the United States could signal the Taliban, and potentially the Kashmiri separatist, that if they are willing to agree to not use Afghanistan and Pakistan territory to launch international terrorist attacks, the United States and NATO would agree to end hostilities against them. The offering of the willingness to negotiate along these terms could

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Barnett R. Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, "From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2008): 30-44. More information on the split between *al Qaeda* and the Taliban is widely available in contemporary literature; however, "From Great Game to Grand Bargain" is an excellent source.

constitute a framework for negotiation. Any agreement in which the Taliban or other militant group disavows *al Qaeda* would serve as a strategic defeat for *al Qaeda*.⁹⁵

Military

The military element is the most familiar to the professional soldiers who are tasked with conducting COIN operations. However, as FM 3-24 states, careful attention must be taken to not apply too many resources from the military element at the expense of the other elements.⁹⁶ Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said, “where possible, what the military calls kinetic operations should be subordinated to measures aimed at promoting better governance, economic programs that spur development, and efforts to address grievances among the discontented, from which the terrorists recruit.”⁹⁷ Continuing, Secretary Gates said that it is the strategy of the United States to use indirect approaches to build the capacity of partner nations and their security forces. To that end, in order to achieve its strategic objectives in the region, the United States should utilize the military element of national power to defeat *al Qaeda* and to continue training Afghan and Pakistan security forces in COIN operations. Furthermore, by providing the security necessary to allow the government of Afghanistan to overcome its weaknesses, the U.S. will be assisting the government of Afghanistan in its efforts to gain legitimacy in the eyes of its population.

The first task for the military is and has been since 9/11 to defeat *al Qaeda*. This must continue. In order to do this it is likely that the U.S. will have to continue the direct approach of

⁹⁵ Barnett R. Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, “From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2008): 39.

⁹⁶ United States Department of the Army. FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Washington, D.C.: GPO, December 2006, 5-11.

⁹⁷ Robert Gates, “A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age,” *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2008): 28-40.

conducting Predator strikes within the border of Pakistan. The U.S. should utilize the aforementioned summit between Afghanistan and Pakistan to broker a deal that would allow the U.S. to continue these strikes. However, counterterror strikes such as these that result in civilian casualties serve to undermine U.S. COIN efforts and threaten to serve as fuel for *al Qaeda's* rhetoric. Accordingly, the value of each of these strikes must be evaluated individually prior to their execution.⁹⁸

The current government of Afghanistan is new and will take time to establish legitimacy in the eyes of the people. The U.S. and its partner NATO nations must continue to provide security in order to allow this to happen. By providing this security, the U.S. and NATO can assure the population that they do not have to live under the oppression of the Taliban. Allowing the government of Afghanistan the time to establish its legitimacy will take years, but it will ultimately create another U.S. ally in the region and help eradicate a terrorist safe haven.

The U.S. military should also assist the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in conducting counterdrug operations. While this may not seem like a task for the U.S. military, it is appropriate. The illegal drug trade accounts for 25-40 percent of the Taliban's funds.⁹⁹ By assisting the ANSF in their counterdrug operations, the U.S. will ensure that the Taliban and *al Qaeda* are cut off from one of their main sources of income. This indirect approach of attacking the Taliban and *al Qaeda* could produce significant results. Moreover, by assisting the Afghans in the development of a crop alternative to poppy, the U.S. will be helping to build the legitimate economy of Afghanistan and reducing the illicit drug market. Helping the government of

⁹⁸ Daniel Markey, *Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt*. Council Special Report No. 36, New York: Council on Foreign Relations Center for Preventive Action, 2008, 28.

⁹⁹ Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Updated September 29, 2008, 43. In addition to funding a substantial portion of the Taliban's income, Afghanistan produces 93 percent of the world's illicit opium supply.

Afghanistan to build its legitimate economy is another means by which the U.S. can assist the Afghan government in overcoming some of its weaknesses. Furthermore, as was previously stated, counterdrug operations are an area in which the U.S. and Iran can agree. Quiet negotiations could bring the Iranians in as a partner nation in this endeavor, and increase Iran's assistance with respect to funding transportation and communications projects in Afghanistan.

The final initiative that the military element of national power should facilitate is the training of the ANSF and Pakistan Security Forces for COIN operations. FM 3-24 states that success in COIN operations requires the establishment of a legitimate government that is supported by the people and able to address the fundamental causes that insurgents use to gain support. Achieving these goals requires the host nation to defeat insurgents or render them irrelevant, uphold the rule of law, and provide essential services and security to the population. The key to this is the development of the host nation security forces.¹⁰⁰ This task will not be easy in either Afghanistan or Pakistan.

In Afghanistan, the national army (ANA) is becoming a major force in stabilizing the country and a national symbol.¹⁰¹ However, the Afghan national police (ANP) are seen as corrupt. Indeed, there is a widespread consensus that the effort to build the ANP lags behind the ANA by about eighteen months. That said, U.S. officials believe that building a credible and capable national police force is at least as important to combating the Taliban as building the ANA.¹⁰² In addition to building the ANP, the United States should capitalize on the tribal nature of the population and consider encouraging Afghanistan to empower local leaders and build the capacity of local police forces that would be more connected to their local area. As has been previously

¹⁰⁰ United States Department of the Army. FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. Washington, D.C.: GPO, December 2006, 6-1.

¹⁰¹ Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Updated September 29, 2008, 34.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 37.

stated, by building the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces, the United States will be assisting the government of Afghanistan as it strives to gain legitimacy.

In Pakistan, the situation is also difficult. The Pakistani Army has spent its entire existence focused on a major combat operations threat in the form of India. It would need to refocus itself on COIN operations in order to combat the militants operating in their tribal areas. This would be a difficult proposition for the Pakistan Army since they established, and may very well continue to aid these very militants. Influencing Pakistan to allow the U.S. or NATO nations to train their army in COIN operations as well as focusing their attention on their own internal threats would require negotiations and a significant reduction in Pakistan's fears of isolation against India. Reducing Pakistan's fears of isolation, will be a significant step towards eliminating the sanctuary for terrorism and militancy that exists in Pakistan's tribal areas.

Economic

As was stated earlier, Afghanistan and Iraq are not the same. Perhaps nowhere is this truer than with respect to their economic conditions. Iraq has long benefited from oil revenues; while in land locked Afghanistan, thirty-five years of war, the ruggedness of the terrain, and the lack of a transportation and communications network significantly reduce the ability of the government to generate revenue. In order to help develop the legitimate economy of Afghanistan, which was virtually non-existent prior to the U.S. invasion, the U.S. and its allies will have to depend largely on diplomatic efforts.

One example of how diplomacy can be used for economic gains is the U.S. can organize international donor groups that will assist in the development of Afghanistan and Pakistan's infrastructure. One example of these groups could be a multilateral donor/investor group that includes China, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Japan, and the European Union

(EU).¹⁰³ Additionally, the U.S. could potentially negotiate economic deals from Iran and India to continue to invest in the future of Afghanistan and Pakistan. These two groups of investors would assist Afghanistan and Pakistan in building transportation and communications infrastructure, oil and gas pipelines, and providing employment opportunities. However, for these projects to come to fruition it will be essential that conditions be properly set. First and foremost amongst the conditions is the establishment of security.

In order to assist Afghanistan in its efforts to provide security for its population the U.S. should continue to invest in the development of Afghanistan's security forces. Between 2002 and 2008 the U.S. has given \$16.5 billion to train and equip the ANSF.¹⁰⁴ This trend must continue if the government of Afghanistan is going to gain legitimacy.

Furthermore, economic resources should continue to be used in Pakistan, which is inextricably linked to Afghanistan, to help finance their COIN and counterterror operations against *al Qaeda* and the Taliban. Since 9/11 the vast majority of U.S. monetary assistance to Pakistan has gone to Pakistan's army.¹⁰⁵ The assistance for non-military activities has paled in comparison. While the U.S. should not neglect financing Pakistan's security forces, the U.S. should refocus its economic efforts in Pakistan and spend more money on non-military projects and initiatives such as education, support to local government capacity, and infrastructure

¹⁰³ Daniel Markey, *Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt*. Council Special Report No. 36, New York: Council on Foreign Relations Center for Preventive Action, 2008, 50.

¹⁰⁴ United States Government Accounting Office, *Afghanistan Security: Further Congressional Action May be Needed to Ensure Completion of a Detailed Plan to Develop and Sustain Capable Afghan National Security Forces*, June 2008, Rep. GAO-08-661, 1.

¹⁰⁵ United States Government Accountability Office, *Preliminary Observations on the Use and Oversight of U.S. Coalition Support Funds Provided to Pakistan*, May 2008, Rep. GAO-08-735R, 12. According to this study, from October 2001 through June 2007, the US reimbursed Pakistan over \$5.5 billion for operations undertaken in support of U.S. and International Security Force (ISAF)/NATO operations in Afghanistan. Additionally, the U.S. has provided \$1.52 billion since 2002 as part of a five-year, \$3 billion presidential assistance package. Over the same time frame non-military assistance has totaled roughly \$3.1 billion. Not until 2008 were these funds directed for use only in "counterterrorism and law enforcement activities directed against *al Qaeda* and the Taliban and associate terrorists groups." Finally, the Pakistan military relies on the U.S. for approximately one-quarter of its \$4 billion budget.

projects. By focusing economic efforts in these areas the U.S. may be able to assist Pakistan in combating the sources of their insurgencies rather than merely treating some of their symptoms.

To be sure, the problem in Afghanistan and subsequently its solutions are not simple. To that end, the United States and its allies must utilize their governmental resources in order to achieve their desired strategic objectives. For the United States this means determining what the strategic objectives are. Whatever the new U.S. administration determines their strategic objectives to be, they cannot be accomplished as long as the Afghan government suffers from weaknesses in their security forces, a lack of a transportation and communications infrastructure that connects the government to its people, and the Taliban and *al Qaeda* have an active sanctuary in Pakistan. Furthermore, it is essential that the U.S. strategy focus on the government of Pakistan and easing its fears of isolation and abandonment. Doing so will prevent Pakistan from pursuing their own agenda at the cost of others. A combination of direct and indirect approaches that leverage all of the elements of national power is the best way to accomplish these objectives. This is not a short-term venture. Indeed, it may take many years; however reaching a solution that achieves the United States strategic objectives is vital to the security of the nation and the well being of both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

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